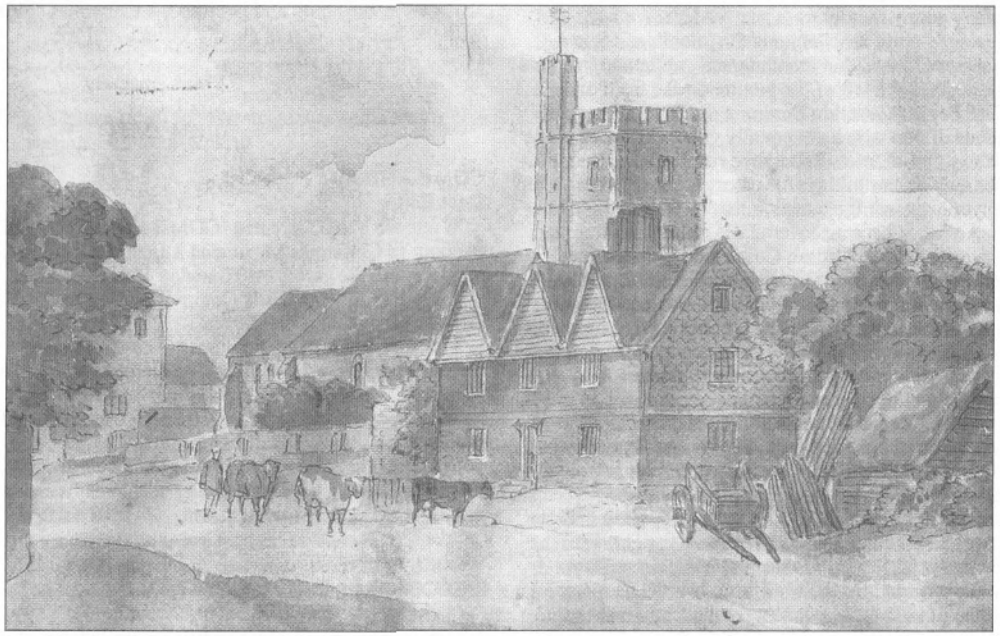
ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ■ DECEMBER 2002 NUMBER 374

We Wish you a Happy Christmas



This watercolour painting of Rainham High Street has some 'artistic licence'. The painting was acquired by Mr Edwin Jelly in 1908 and belonged to a collection dated 1790-1800. Freddie Cooper continues his article 'The Changing Face of Rainham' on page 8.

Robert J. Kitney

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Next Issue: January 18th 2003
Copy Date: Dec 30th Sm Ads Jan 3rd

Editorial: Mrs Barbara Mackay Miller, 5 Meresborough Cotts, Tel: 231307.

Advertising: Hamish Mackay Miller, 5 Meresborough Cotts, Tel: 231307.

Editorial

The two Rainham Secondary Schools which opened in Orchard Street in the 1930s obviously bring back many happy memories to our readers. We have received more recollections this month and it has been confirmed that the unnamed gentleman in sports flannels at the left of the picture on the front of October 2002 Action Forum is Mr Brady. I hope all those of you who have equally good memories of the school in Solomon Road have responded to their plea for help in compiling a 'Memories of Meredale'. Can anyone answer the question that has arisen as to how and when it became 'Meredale' rather than Rainham Council School. I admit Council School does not sound either original or imaginative but cannot work out how it arrived at Meredale. Mardale House and garage are in the High Street, has that anything to do with it?

This month we feature several Christmas concerts and sing alongs, no longer are you restricted to the Nine Lessons and Carols at the local churches, now you have a choice of venue if you just fancy a good evening singing Christmas songs. Of course you will also be more than welcome at the many special services provided over the Christmas period in our churches, sometimes we become so caught up in the commercial side of the festival it is easy to forget what it should be all about, so it is good to spare some time to reflect and enjoy the Christmas story.

As with many organisations the Lions Club make December one of their major fund raising periods. This year they are planning a huge refreshment tent at the Dickens Festival in Rochester on the 7th and 8th, a street collection on the 14th, their popular Christmas Sleigh Runs from the 17th to 20th and another collection at the large Tesco supermarket over the weekend of 21st to 22nd. All the money raised is used throughout the year for local people so do please support them generously. They can make all the difference to families who have a spell of bad luck.

So plenty to do this month, even a few walks if the weather stays fine, just the thing to work off those Christmas excesses. Until the new year do have a very good month and we will see you again, as usual, towards the end of January to allow our distributors a well earned short rest and hopefully avoid the worst of the winter weather. See you then.

Correspondence

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Dear Editor,

St Peter's Church, Bredhurst, will be holding their annual Christmas Fayre in Bredhurst Village Hall at 2.00pm on Saturday 7th December 2002.

Father Christmas will be in his grotto, there will be the Grand Draw, and all the usual stalls of gifts, cakes, plants, bric-a-brac, tombola, games, books and lots more. As an added attraction this year, there will be a live performance, at 3.30pm, by Bredhurst Village Children's Choir, who will be singing carols and seasonal songs.

Please come along and get into the Christmas spirit with us. Your support is greatly valued, and we would love to see you.

Yours sincerely
Mrs J. Cox
01634 268544

COME AND SING

Dear Editor,

Wigmore MADS present 'COME AND SING', an evening of Christmas Music and a chance to join in singing with the carols on Thursday 12th December at 8.00pm in St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Drive, Wigmore.

Tickets £4 (£3.50 concessions), including mince pie and coffee, available from Sue Burrows – Medway 370639.

We are also looking for new members to come and join us for our Music Hall in March 2003. Maybe your talents include singing, acting, building scenery, painting, creating props or sewing costumes. We always need all kinds of help, why not give it a try?

Yours sincerely,
Mrs Sue Burrows

PIERCE FAMILY HISTORY

Dear Editor,

I am researching the branch of my family who came from Rainham and I am hoping for copies of some old photos, perhaps old postcards, of Rainham and any information available on the shops in the High Street in the early 1900s. My grandfather ELLIS PIERCE was a grocer in the High Street and my father ERNEST VERNON PIERCE was born there in 1890.

Many thanks for your help.

Yours sincerely,
Doreen North
The Rosery
38 Little Bushey Lane
Bushey Heath
Watford
Herts WD23 4RN
Tel: 020 8950 6823
E-mail: north@bushey-heath.demon.co.uk

HISTORY PROJECT

Dear Editor,

Some months ago I wrote to your magazine asking for help with an oral history project. The project was to provide online resources for primary schools teaching on the history curriculum. I was seeking volunteers to be interviewed who had memories of growing up in the local area before and during World War Two. I was extremely pleased that several people contacted me and were subsequently interviewed as part of the project.

If any of your readers are interested in viewing the video clips, they can be seen on the school website at www.fairview-jun.medway.sch.uk. Follow the link to the oral history project. The resource is designed for schools with fast Internet connections. As most of the interview clips are between 2 and 3MB I would only recommend viewing them if you have a broadband connection due to download times.

Thanks again to your magazine and all who volunteered to take part!

Yours sincerely,
R. Halls
Deputy Headteacher
Fair View Community
Junior School
01634 231618

MEREDALE SCHOOL

Dear Editor,

I was saddened to read in the November issue of Action Forum that the infant school is to be closed down next August. I started school there in September 1940. I remember it like it was yesterday. My mother and her friend Mrs Cross (121 High Street, Jewellers) took daughter Anne and myself. We walked down Ivy Street and Anne and I went happily into our first day. My memories from there include a little play we performed called 'Pictures in the Fire'. The teacher's desk was disguised as a fireplace and we children were dressed as nursery rhyme characters as we walked through the underside of the desk. As war went on we were issued with gas masks to carry to school. One day a little boy offered to carry mine, which he did to the top of Ivy Street. He then demanded a kiss as payment which I was glad to give and happy to receive since it was my very first from the opposite sex! The only teacher I remember is Mrs Babbage. I wonder if she is still alive? She sent me into the hall many times to find out the time from the big clock hanging there. She also stood me in the corner of the classroom one day for failing to return a book to one of my classmates from whom I had borrowed it. Needless to say I returned the book next day.

My parents owned the newsagents (Greens) at the top of Ivy Street and I suppose because it was comparatively safe in those days Anne and I were allowed to walk to school and home alone each day. Anne and I were friends for many years until we were married and then we lost touch. I would love to hear from her if she is still in Rainham. I shall be visiting England next June 2003 and will certainly make a point of going to see my old schools while I am in Kent. I look forward to renewing my memories, and maybe some acquaintances of old friends.

Sincerely,
Wendy (Green) Bean
555 N. Pantano Road
+388, Tuscon,
Arizona. 85710 USA.

BURNS NIGHT BARN DANCE

Dear Editor,

Medway and Maidstone VSO group will be holding their annual BURNS' NIGHT BARN DANCE fund raising event on Saturday 25th January 2003 at Chatham Grammar School for Boys, Letchworth Avenue, Chatham, starting at 7.30pm – long time supporters will notice this is a new venue for us. We welcome the return of 'Pilgrims Way' and their excellent caller to supply the music and a hot supper will be provided although we ask participants to bring their own drinks and glasses – you will need them! This is always a popular event, tickets being priced at £7.50 and must be bought in advance. If any Action Forum readers would like further details or tickets please phone Pam or Philip Cole on Medway 376608.

Yours sincerely,
Pam Cole (VSO Local Events Co-ordinator)

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Diary 2002

Keeper: Mrs Christine Smith
275 Wigmore Road
Wigmore
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No charge is made for Diary entries
Diary Copy Date: 31st December 2002

December 5th-14th – Medway Little Theatre, 'A Christmas Carol', 7.30pm. Box Office 400322.
December 7th-9th – Christmas Tree Festival, St Matthew's Church, Drewery Drive, Wigmore. Admission free. Saturday 7th 10.00am to 4.00pm. Sunday 8th 2.00pm to 4.00pm. Monday 9th 2.30pm to 4.00pm. Ring 235056 for details.
December 7th – Sing Out Christmas – Carol singing around the Christmas Trees at St Matthew's Church, Drewery Drive, to music from the Gillingham Salvation Army Band.
December 7th-8th – 10.00am to 5.00pm. Christmas Show at the Old Reed Bed Pottery Studios, The Street, Lower Halstow. Opposite the Three Tuns public house. Daytime enquiries 01795 842481.
December 7th – Bredhurst Christmas Fayre, Village Hall, 2.00pm. Children's Choir 3.30pm.
December 7th & 8th – Rainham & District Dollshouse & Miniaturist Group exhibition, Guildhall Museum, Rochester.
December 7th – Medway Folk Dance Club. *Christmas Dance, American Supper. 7.30 to* 10.00pm. United Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Gillingham.
December 9th – Great Lines Music Centre Christmas Concert at St Matthew's Church, Drewery Drive. Admission free with a retiring collection.
December 9th – Mothers' Union Carol Service – open to all at St Matthew's Church, Drewery Drive.
December 10th – Gillingham and District Fuchsia & Pelargonium Society. Christmas Party.
December 10th – Rainham Evening Machine Knitting Club. 8.00 to 10.00pm. The Red Cross Gillingham Centre, *31 Balmoral Road, Gillingham.* Contact no. 01634 862673.
December 11th – Rainham Flower Club. Christmas Party.
December 11th – Bredhurst WI. Birthday Party. Entertainment by The Kent Music School. 7.30pm in the Village Hall.
December 11th – Medway Camcorder Club, Animation Demonstration. 7.30pm, Medway Motor Yacht Club, Borstal. Ring 371570 for details.
December 12th – Gillingham Flower Arrangers. Social Evening. 7.30pm, The Garrison Church Hall, Mansion Row, Brompton.
December 12th – Wigmore Thursday Club. Mrs Phippen 'Christmas Stocking', 2.00pm, St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Drive, Wigmore. For people over the age of 50. For further information telephone 235507.
December 12th – MADS, COME AND SING, Christmas Music, St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Drive, 8.00pm. Tickets £4 (£3.50 concessions) includes mince pie & coffee. Box Office 370639.
December 12th – Countryside Event, Birdwatching Cruise, £17.50 payable in advance. Ring 378987 for details.
December 13th – Gillingham and Rainham Local *History Society. Frosts, freezes and fairs chronicles* of the frozen Thames and Medway (with slides) from 7.15pm, Adult Education Centre, Green Street, Gillingham.
December 14th-15th – 10.00am to 5.00pm. Christmas Show at the Old Reed Bed Pottery Studios. (see 7th Dec)
December 14th – Sittingbourne Orpheus Choral Society. Music for Christmas Concert, 7.30pm, Swallows Leisure Centre, Sittingbourne. Tickets £8.50 (£6.00 concessions, accompanied children under 11 free) from 01634 233521.
December 14th – Countryside Event. Children's Christmas Crafts, 10.30 to 12 noon. Riverside Country Park. £1.50, book on 378987.
December 14th – Medway & District HF Holidays Group walk, meet 10.30am Tenterden High Street, opposite church by the Eight Bells.

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December 16th – Rainham Evening WI. Letter 'X'. Xmas Party. Hand Chimes – Mrs Barbara Brown. 7.30pm, Platters Lodge, Highfield Road, Rainham.
December 16th – Wigmore WRVS Darby & Joan Club. Christmas Tea and Raffle.
December 16th – Countryside Event. Talk, Riverside Country Park, 7.30pm, 'Heritage Museum'. £1.60, book on 378987.
December 18th – Bredhurst Garden Club. CHRISTMAS DINNER. Members only.
December 18th – Wigmore Afternoon Townswomen's Guild. Christmas Party.
December 19th – Rainham WI Christmas Party.
December 19th – Wigmore Thursday Club. Carol Service.
December 21st – Instep Dancing Christmas Dance. Rainham School for Girls. Enquiries 01634 363738
December 21st – Quiz Night at the Oast House. Contact no. 374558.
January 2nd – Countryside Event, Capstone Country Park, Children's Event. £1.50, book on 812196.
January 4th – JUMBLE SALE. 11.00am at St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Drive, Wigmore.
January 4th – Countryside Event. Festive Guided Walk of Capstone Country Park. £1.50, book on 812196.
January 4th – Parish of South Gillingham Dortmund Exchange Group, Jumble Sale, 11.00am, St Matthew's Community Centre.
January 10th, 11th, 16th-18th, 24th, 25th, 30th-1st Feb – RATS, 'Babes in the Wood', 8.00pm (Sat also 2.00 & 5.00pm). £5.00, Box Office 360506.
January 11th – Countryside Event. Birdwatching Cruise, £17.50 payable in advance, 378987.
January 11th – Medway & District HF Holidays group walk, 10.15am, Hollingbourne Station. Dry packed lunch, 7.5 miles.
January 11th – Instep Dancing.
January 14th – Medway Antique & Collectors' Club. 7.30 for 8.00pm, St George Hotel, New Road, Chatham. 17th century tokens – Mr Ron Josland. Ring 365861 for details.
January 15th – Bredhurst Garden Club, Bredhurst Village Hall, 8.00pm. Illustrated talk 'Birding in Kent'. Mr C. Bradshaw, details from 233554.
January 17th – Gillingham Recorded Music Society. A little light music. 7.15 to 9.15pm. St Augustine's Church Room (top of Rock Avenue), Gillingham.
January 22nd – Wigmore Afternoon Townswomen's Guild. Presentation. Competition: China Flower. 1.45 to 4.15pm, Howard Hall, Woodside, Wigmore.
January 22nd – Countryside Event Bird Walk, 11.30am, Riverside Country Park. £1.50, book on 378987.
January 25th – Medway & Maidstone VSO Burns Night Barn Dance, 7.30pm. Chatham Grammar School for Boys, Letchworth Avenue, Chatham. Tickets (inc hot supper). £7.50, ring 376608 to book.
January 25th – Instep Dancing.
January 27th – Medway Spinners, Dyers & Weavers *Association.* Coat Hangar Free Expression Weaving. (see 13th Jan)
February 22nd – Channel Theatre Company at Upchurch Village Hall, 8.00pm, 'Spooky Little Girl'. Tickets £5 (£4 concessions) from 231326 or 230526 early January.

PANTOMIMES

Hazlitt Theatre, Maidstone. THE WIZARD OF OZ. Monday 2nd December 2002 to Sunday 5th January 2003. Box Office – 01622 758611.
The Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury. DICK WHITTINGTON. Thursday 5th December 2002 to Sunday 19th January 2003. Box Office – 01227 787 787.
The Orchard Theatre, Dartford. JACK AND THE BEANSTALK. 6th December 2002 to Sunday 12th January 2003. Box Office – 01322 220000.
The Central Theatre, Chatham. DICK *WHITTINGTON. 10th December* 2002 to 5th January 2003. Box Office – 01634 338338.
The Rainham Theatrical Society. BABES IN THE WOOD. January 10th, 11th, 16th 17th, 18th, 24th, 25th, 30th, 31st, February 1st, 2003. 8.00pm Sat also 2.00pm and 5.00pm. Box *Office – 01634* 360506.
Medway Little Theatre. A CHRISTMAS CAROL. 5th to 14th December. Box Office – 01634 400322.

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LIONS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM

The build-up to Christmas is one of the busiest times of year for the Lions Club of Gillingham – part of Lions Clubs International.

Members of the Club, who come from all parts of Gillingham and range in age from their twenties to their seventies, will be collecting money in a variety of ways, to be used to benefit people **in the area** who need a little extra help.

Here are some of the events that the Lions Club of Gillingham will be involved in during the coming few weeks:

Saturday/Sunday 7th/8th December – running the **huge refreshment marquee** (opposite Rochester Cathedral) as part of the **Dickens Festival.**

Saturday 14th December – annual **Christmas street collection** in **Gillingham High Street.**

Tuesday 17th to Friday 20th December – **Christmas Sleigh Runs.** In this popular annual event, the Lions' sleigh tours the streets of Twydal, Hempstead, Parkwood and Wigmore, playing carols. As the sleigh passes slowly by, Lions will be collecting donations from the nearby residents.

Saturday/Sunday 21st/22nd December – **Christmas collection at Tesco supermarket** by Bowater's roundabout. This traditional bucket collection against a background of carols, will this year be donated towards the much-needed state-of-the-art hand-held breast cancer scanner and diagnostic system for Maidstone Hospital – the centre for oncology that serves the Gillingham and Medway areas.

The Lions Club of Gillingham will be grateful for everyone's support in raising money this Christmas to help local people who may have hit on hard times, a spell of bad luck or are perhaps facing illness.

During the course of the year, the Gillingham Lions have helped a wide variety of local people and causes. For example, the Club has purchased many items of everyday domestic equipment; specialist equipment for disabled people; organised a holiday for a deserving family; organised harvest teas for old folk; and a host of other things. The Club also makes a regular monthly donation to the Air Ambulance

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

On Saturday 22nd February 2003, at 8.00pm, the Channel Theatre Company will once again visit Upchurch Village Hall.

Their performances in the past have been excellent, displaying skill, versatility and humour to transport their audiences to imaginary places.

This time the play is called 'Spooky Little Girl', written by Helen Kelly, who also writes for the Alan Ayckbourn Theatre in Scarborough. It is a supernatural thriller, which promises some comic moments together with a few surprises along the way. Don't miss it!

For tickets (£5 and £4 concessions) call 01634 231326 or 01634 230526 from early January.

MEDWAY ANTIQUE & COLLECTORS' CLUB

2002 proved to be another successful year for the Medway Antique & Collectors' Club. In the main, meetings were well attended by an encouraging mix of both members and visitors who enjoyed listening to speakers covering a wide range of subjects, some of which were illustrated with slides. The 2003 programme of ten talks is now complete and commences on 14th January with '17th Century Tokens' by Ron Josland. The highlight of this year's talks will undoubtedly be a visit by the well known David Sandon on 10th June giving an illustrated talk on 'Doulton & The Craftsman Potter Movement'.

Our social calendar also includes a day trip to Standen (NT) in May, a club barbeque in July, a weekend break in Salisbury in October and a Christmas dinner social in December. These events provide members and visitors alike with an ideal opportunity to meet each other in an informal, relaxed atmosphere and continue to be a popular aspect of club activities.

Membership fees are £15 per person per year, or you can come as a visitor and pay £2.50 on the night. Our club meetings are held every second Tuesday every month in the St George Hotel, New Road, Chatham, at 7.30pm for 8.00pm. Come and join us. You will be made most welcome. For further details please contact John Orr on 01634 365861.

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Nature Notes

NATURE NOTES FOR NOVEMBER

In the south wall of St Margaret's Church is a stained glass window to the memory of Solomon Brice (1832 to 1904) who is buried in the churchyard. At the apex of the window is the scene of a grey partridge flying over a field of stooks of corn. With a few rare exceptions, corn is now cut by combined harvester and stooks have accordingly disappeared from the harvest fields.

In his book, 'Notes on the Birds of Rainham', published in 1894, Walter Prentis notes that the grey partridge 'is generally distributed in the district. Our chalk soil, with hill and valley, field and wood combined, makes excellent sport for the 1st of September'. Although grey partridges can still be seen locally, their numbers have drastically reduced since the days of Solomon Brice and Walter Prentis.

I have observed both the native grey and the introduced red legged partridge in the fields adjoining South Bush and Spade Lanes and on Gore Farm. Until recent years the former fields were used mainly for the growing of hops, apples, pears, soft fruit and other market garden produce. Today most of the land is used for the growing of cereals and the grazing of horses. In early November I walked the public footpaths and lanes of the area.

Corn fields in Solomon Brice's day would have been plagued with weeds, including colourful flowers such as corn camomile, cornflower or bluebottle, corn marigold, corn cockle and field poppy. Solomon would therefore be amazed by the lack of weeds in the vast majority of cereal fields these days. But he would find the fields of stubble adjoining South Bush and Spade Lanes somewhat familiar. The wheat growing this summer in these fields had been set by an organic farmer who had used no herbicides. Consequently the crop was full of weeds and even after the wheat had been cut the weeds continued to flourish – dock, wild carrot, bristley ox tongue and scentless mayweed, among other plants. There was, however, no trace of those colourful cornfield flowers beloved of painters of the countryside of the 1940s and 1950s such as S.R. Badmin and C.F. Tunnicliffe.

I noticed during my walk that manure was being heaped in two of the three fields prior to being spread. This was a practice well known to Solomon Brice but one which has been largely replaced by the use of artificial fertilisers. Until the time that the three fields are ploughed the stubble will be a source of food for such birds as finches, skylarks and meadow pipits.

During my walk I disturbed a good many wood pigeons. The area provides a rich crop of food for them. They feed on cabbage, cherries, cereals and ivy and holly berries. I also came across a large flock of linnets which flew up to some wires until such time as I had passed. They were feeding on the hard and tiny seeds of the remains of a crop of flax.

I had my eyes open, in particular, for any grey partridges. They will normally spot you before you spot them. If a field appears to be empty of bird life it is a good practice to wait and see. Any grey partridges that are crouching close to the ground will eventually poke their heads above cover to see if you are still there. They will arise with a whirring of wings and calls of alarm if approached too closely.

Red legged partridges are easier to spot than the native grey. They are bigger, less timid and more colourful. If caught in the open with no cover they will run quickly away with heads held high. If there is cover they will hold their heads down and creep away.

I failed to spot any grey partridges on this occasion but there were plenty of red legged ones about. I watched one group through my binoculars preening themselves unconcernedly in the sunshine near Roman Villas. I would guess that they had been reared and were being fed by a gamekeeper. Whatever one may think about game shooting the fact is that the red legged partridge, a colourful character of the English countryside, would not be resident here were it not for shooting. It was introduced from the South of France, hence its alternative name of French partridge. Walter Prentis does not mention the species in his book and we can therefore assume that it was not to be found in the Rainham district in his day.

Joe Ennis

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THE CHANGING FACE OF RAINHAM

Continued from November 2002

Mr William Henry Barling (late W. Rush) was in Manchester House, next to Ivy Street, and sold 'up to date drapery goods of every description, with a splendid selection of dress materials and curtains'. He was the agent for Frister & Rossmann's sewing machines and Mortimer Brothers High Class Dyers and Cleaners.

George Whayman was on The Banks, almost opposite Ivy Street, an 'Outfitter and Boot Merchant' who sold men's clothing of every description, ready made or gentlemen's suits to measure for 24/6d (£1/22½p) or trousers for 7/11d (40p).

Edwin Jelley nearly opposite at Cheapside on the eastern corner of Pudding Lane also boasted the most up to date stock of reliable clothing with gentlemen's ready to wear suits at £1. He gave 5% discount for cash and was agent for six stated brands of footwear.

Glass and Son, the family Bakers, were two doors east of Marlborough House and were very popular as pastry cooks and cake manufacturers beside being corn, flour and seed factors with van deliveries to all parts daily. They had their name painted high up on the side wall and I remember buying 2d of stale buns when an aunt told me to wait for lunch.

The Lion Hotel was a very busy hostelry being headquarters to The Cycling, Cricket and Football Clubs, The Cottage Gardeners Society, Ancient Order of Foresters and The Court of Anglo Saxons. Like all pubs they had their own Benefit Society which paid members during sickness or upon death with a share out in December. Phil Curling, mine host, was 'handicapper to all the principal Club and Race meetings in the District'. Professional running and cycling were popular even in the 20s and 30s and I remember seeing Sam Ferris the Olympic long distance runner who had been challenged to compete against a man named Walters from Upchurch.

The Rainham and District Co-operative Society Ltd, with all departments in Station Road, had only recently been formed at the turn of the century but its turnover in 1907 was £16,000 with profit of £1,500 and a membership of 505. Its telephone number is not quoted but I believe it was number 4. There were no multiples except perhaps the Co-op which was owned by the members so the proprietors would know most of their customers and become important personalities within the village. A majority of the shops listed in 1908 were still within the same family ownership 20 or 30 years later.

A business which needed no advertisement locally was that of George Longley, Nurseryman and Florist, then operating from Mardale Nursery in Chapel Lane (now Miers Court Road) and Pond House just west of the present Durland House. Numbers 29 and 31 Miers Court Road still have the name Mardale Nursery 1905 high up on the front. I understand that the family came from Sheldwich in 1819, were founder members of the original English Rose Society in the 1890s and were the only Rainham firm to be granted the Royal Warrant which was exhibited on the front of Pond House. The rose gardens were a wonderful sight adjacent to the railway line between Station Road and Berengrave Lane and later on both sides of the lane below the railway arch. Although some members of the family branched out into farming the present Berengrave Nursery is operated by a direct descendant of those who came to Rainham nearly 200 years ago and I hope to write a separate story in a future issue as the history of the Longley family is very typical of the history of Rainham over the last two centuries.

Freddie Cooper

ADULT LEARNING

New Year's resolutions are just around the corner – what will yours be this year? What about taking up some new learning for work, for home or simply for leisure and pleasure?

The adult and community learning service has a new directory coming out later this month for courses starting January to July 2003. Copes will be available from all their centres and the local libraries. If you have trouble obtaining a copy you can telephone 01634 33 84 00 and ask for one to be posted to you.

Enrolments are being taken both before Christmas and in the New Year. The main centres in Gillingham and Rochester remain open for information and enrolments until Friday 20th December but are then closed until 2nd January.

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THE ORIGIN OF A NAME – CARVORAN

Dear Editor,

As long time residents of Carvoran Way in Wigmore, we have often mused on the name and where it originated.

Local readers might be interested to know the results of some recent holiday research we undertook. Some years ago we were looking at an ordnance survey map of Hadrian's Wall and noticed a little known fort marked as site only called 'Carvoran'. This year we took the opportunity to visit Hadrian's Wall and using our old OS map managed to find the site easily – now housing the 'Roman Army Museum'. (Incidentally worth a visit and contact can be made through www.vindolanda.co or 01697 747485.)

On enquiring at the museum, staff were interested in our story and pointed to ridges in the neighbouring field indicating the rectangular outline of the fort. *Unfortunately there has been no excavation of the site* yet due to a lack of funds.

Oh and the meaning of Carvoran – 'Most glamorous place in the bog!' We think we prefer the Latin version!

One final point readers might be able to answer is why did Edward Drewery choose this name when the bungalows were built?

Yours sincerely
Pam and Philip Cole
01634 376608

RAINHAM SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Dear Editor,

Mr Austin's letter in August Action Forum was of great interest to my family and I thought it appropriate to add further comments. I attended the school from 1935 to 1939 and remember the staff at that time. Mr Smith was headmaster of the Boys and Miss Hare headmistress of the Girls School.

The schools were built round central quadrangles and I can place most of the masters in their specialist rooms. Mr Gleadle, science and maths, Mr Norman Pharaoh, music, he later married one of the girls' teachers, Mr Bill Taylor next door to Mr Alan Fenton, sports. In the corner room, Mr Bill Homes taught maths: two years ago when I spoke to him he was in poor health. Mr Smyth, metalworker next door to Mr Sargeant, woodwork and finally Mr Bert Newell in the art room. Like Mr Austin I have special regards for the school, now a Junior School. All my *sons attended there and currently* two granddaughters are pupils plus a grandson starting at the Infants in September. Fortunately, the present staff appear to be keeping up the tradition of excellence.

Yours sincerely,
J.A. Foulser, MBE
59 Broadview Avenue

CHRISTMAS SHOW AT THE OLD REED BED STUDIOS The Street Lower Halstow

We are three local potters, two are recent graduates and the third a more established maker.

We will be having our Christmas show on the weekends of 7th-8th and 14th-15th December. Hours are from 10am to 5pm daily. Please ring 01795 842481 during working hours for more information.

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL:
***7th-9th* December**

Everyone is warmly invited to visit our **Christmas Tree Festival** to be held in St Matthew's Church, Drewery Drive. Local organisations will be decorating their own Christmas Trees, some staging small displays, and collecting for their charity. Admission to the Church will be **FREE** –

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FAMILY LEARNING

Medway adult and community learning service are now offering a programme of family learning – parents/grandparents and children learning through activities together. The classes are funded by the Learning and Skills Council and are free to participants. Activities on offer include: creative arts and crafts, cake decorating, flower arranging, computing, belly dancing and dance.

There are also classes for just the parents and grandparents to help with confidence building and parenting, such as: first aid, baby massage, building *better behaviour with your child, sign language and* assertiveness.

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To find out more and to register your interest contact Home-Start Medway on 01634 570717.

DOLLSHOUSE EXHIBITION

The Rainham & District Dollshouse & Miniaturist Group will be at the Guildhall Museum, Rochester High Street, with an exhibition of dolls' houses and miniatures on Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th *December. The exhibition forms part of the* Museum's Dickens Christmas exhibitions. The group were invited to exhibit by the curator after he had seen the June exhibition. There will be a number of new exhibits and some of the houses and the market will have their Christmas decorations up.

More details from 312038.

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